

## Minutes of Environment and Energy Committee Meeting

September 15, 2015

The Environment and Energy Committee met on Tuesday, September 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Chevy Chase Village Hall. This was the first meeting of the Committee following the summer break. The meeting was chaired by Marea Hatzios Grant, E&E Committee Co-Chair. Those present at the meeting were: Marilyn Bracken (E&E Committee Co-Chair); Oliver Davidson; Susie Eig; Ralph and Betsy Stephens; Jonathan Lyons; Diana Pape; and Gary Crockett (Board Contact).

The Chair reviewed the main themes approved by the Board for the Committee's 2015-2016 work program. These include:

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation
- Green (Renewable) Energy
- Recycling and Composting
- Lecture Series on Sustainable Living

The Committee has also been tasked with working with the Tree Committee to help develop and operationalize the Village's Trees Selection Policy as it relates to the selection, planting and maintenance of native tree species in the Village's Urban Forest.

The first order of business was to identify a topic for the next talk in the Sustainable Living Lecture Series, slated for this fall. The Chair asked Betsy Stephens to describe the Community Solar initiative in Takoma Park and whether it might be a topic of interest to residents of Chevy Chase Village and a possible lecture topic. After some discussion, it was agreed that it was probably premature to promote a community-based solar energy program in the Village as the technologies and costs of installing and distributing solar energy appear to be improving. Betsy agreed to keep the Committee posted on further developments in this rapidly evolving sector.

Discussion then turned to the possibility of organizing an information exchange on the recently introduced Food Composting service in the Village by Compost Crew, a private company that negotiates monthly rates with residents, based on the number of households involved. The current rate, based on participation of about 40 Households, is \$20/month or \$220.00 if paid by the year. Ollie Davidson suggested organizing a talk about food waste including by Compost Crew and a panel of local residents and jurisdictions which have composting programs and facilities. Residents from Chevy Chase Village and the Town of Chevy Chase who could relate their experiences with the new service or simply composting at home. The idea is to make more residents aware of the benefits of food composting and why it's an important element of community sustainability. With greater adoption and demand for composting by Village households, the hope is that composting can eventually be incorporated into an integrated

system of waste management (trash collection, recycling and composting) for the Village, paid for by Village taxes. This is the most efficient way forward and one which several communities have already put into effect.

To help facilitate a transition to a more comprehensive and cost-effective approach to waste management in the Village, Ollie proposed that a small focus group of residents be convened around this topic. The idea would be to gather more data on industry practice in the waste disposal and recycling sub-sectors, what options there are in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties service providers and what practices might be appropriate to make these services cost-effective. Diana Pape offered to work on this with Ollie.

It was also agreed that another field trip be organized for interested residents to the recycling facility where Village recycling materials are processed—Waste America in Ellicott City. This would be organized in late October, prior to the lecture, to inform discussions. Marea agreed to help organize this field trip with Ollie including carpooling arrangements. Additional data would be collected on how other communities in Montgomery County and PG County manage their waste to provide some benchmarks for Village practice. These data and information from the field trip would help inform the lecture and panel discussion, which would be scheduled as the next event in the Sustainable Living Lecture Series, sometime in October or early November.

#### Other lectures in the Series

Discussion then revolved around other possible topics for the lecture series. These included a briefing on responsible use and disposal of pesticides by Marilyn Bracken. This lecture would include the latest guidance from the County on restricted pesticides for lawn use, pending passage of Bill 52-14. This lecture could be scheduled for January or February 2016.

Related to this, would be a separate talk, possibly by master gardeners from Brookside Gardens (a Montgomery County facility) on sustainable gardening, minimizing the use of pesticides and focusing on native species. This talk would be scheduled for early March, to coincide with plans for spring planting by Village residents and the next phase of major planting in the Western Grove Park. Susie Eig and Betsy Stephens agreed to organize this lecture.

#### Native Tree Species Policy

In light of the Board having asked the E&E Committee to provide feedback on various drafts of a Village policy on the use of native species in the selection of trees for planting in the public right of way, the Co-Chair asked Gary Crockett to brief the committee on the status of the latest draft. Gary advised the Committee that the draft which had been circulated in early September (Chevy Chase Village Tree Selection Policy, *Draft 9/2015*), had been approved at the Board Meeting on Monday, September 14, the day before our Committee Meeting. A brief

discussion followed, in which Susie Eig voiced concerns that the guidance on the selection and planting of trees in the right of way was very subjective, and still too vague in terms of tree canopy height, native vs exotic species, minimum spacing and site conditions matched to tree habit for healthy growth and canopy cover, and overall maintenance requirements. There was a shared sense among members of the E&E Committee that the objective of the Village's current tree planting policy emphasized volume (i.e., number of trees planted) over the kinds of trees planted that would optimize objectives of canopy cover, resilience to site conditions and pruning, and ecosystem services like beneficial food webs, water retention and shade. Gary noted the Committee's concerns and said there would be opportunities to amend the policy in practice, along with further guidance. He also noted the Committee's recommendation that more members be added to the Tree Committee, which currently consists of only three members.

In an effort to engage more residents in the work of the Committee, including advancing the agenda for an integrated waste management system for the Village's trash, recycling and composting services, the Committee agreed to reach out to High School students in the Village. HS students could earn Community Service Hours for their participation in sponsored field trips and data collection, as well as bring their parents into the conversation at home and at Village events.

The E&E Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held in late October and will be announced in advance on the Village website and in the Village e-mail blast to encourage broader participation by Village residents.

Respectfully submitted:

Marea Hatziolos Grant (Co-Chair)